



**DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION  
OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL  
FIRE ENGINEERING DIVISION**

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**ATTACHMENT 13**

**Date:** June 6, 2017

**To:** State Board of Fire Services

**From:** Fire Engineering and Investigations Division

**SUBJECT/AGENDA ACTION ITEM:**

New Automatic Fire Extinguishing Systems Certification Program

**Recommended Actions:**

Informational only

**Background Information:**

Fire departments across the state have shared many stories describing faulty and inadequate work on fire suppression systems in their respective jurisdictions. In California, fire sprinklers and other automatic fire extinguishing systems may only be installed by a contractor company licensed by the Contractors State Licensing Board. However, the fire sprinkler fitter, the person who installs fire sprinklers in high-rise buildings, hotels, apartments, hospitals, schools, day care facilities, and industrial buildings are not required to be registered or even certified; nor are they required to be trained or have any experience with installing these life safety systems. Fire sprinkler fitters in California are also not required to complete an apprenticeship program or have any training and experience.

**Analysis/Summary of Issue:**

Following the passage of Assembly Bill 433 in 2013, new regulations will go into effect July 1, 2017 requiring Automatic Fire Extinguishing Systems (AES) Sprinkler Pipefitters to be certified by the CAL FIRE - Office of the State Fire Marshal (CAL FIRE - OSFM). The new regulations require anyone who installs or repairs water-based fire protection systems to possess the necessary skills and qualifications to safely and properly install the system so that it will be operable in its time of need. The new law added Section 13110 to the Health and Safety Code which authorized the State Fire Marshal to

propose, adopt, and administer the regulations he/she deems necessary to ensure fire safety in buildings and structures within this state. Regulations were developed with the help of a workgroup consisting of representatives from industry, labor, enforcing agencies, and CAL FIRE - OSFM staff.

The new program will qualify individuals as "certified fire sprinkler fitters" for the installation, alteration, or repair of water-based fire protection systems, excluding one- and two-family residential sprinkler systems. Apprentices will be required to register with CAL FIRE - OSFM and enroll in a California State or federally approved fire sprinkler apprenticeship program. Trainees not registered in an apprenticeship program will be required to register with CAL FIRE - OSFM and work for no more than one year under the direct supervision of a CAL FIRE - OSFM "certified fire sprinkler fitter."

After the initial implementation period, applicants for commercial certification will be required to have a minimum of 7,000 hours in a State or Federally-approved Fire Sprinkler Fitter Apprenticeship program and five years of experience working within the scope of the regulations. Applicants for multi-family residential certification will be required to have a minimum of 3,500 hours in a State or Federally-approved Fire Sprinkler Fitter Apprenticeship program and two years of experience. Certified Fire Sprinkler Fitters will also be required to complete three units of American National Standards Institute/International Association of Continuing Education and Training (ANSI/IACET) accredited continuing education within a three-year period to ensure fire sprinkler fitters maintain their skills, knowledge, and abilities regarding continuously-changing national, state, and local building and fire codes, standards, laws, and technologies.

CAL FIRE - OSFM and local fire authorities are authorized to inspect project worksites to enforce the new regulations. Violations are subject to Notice of Violation or Correction Orders, Stop Work Orders, revocation and/or suspension of certificates or registrations, and civil and criminal penalties.



# **STATE BOARD OF FIRE SERVICES**

## **AES TALKING POINTS**

### **1. Sprinkler Fitter Certification Regulations**

- Approved by the Office of Administrative Law (OAL) on March 24, 2017
- Will be effective July 1, 2017
- Program will certify Sprinkler Fitters and register Apprentices and Trainees for installations, alterations, and repairs of water-based fire protection systems.
- Regulations were developed with the help of a workgroup consisting of representatives from industry, union & non-union labor, enforcing agencies, and CAL FIRE – OSFM staff.
- This is Phase 1 (installation) of a three-phase plan – Phase 2 will cover testing & maintenance; Phase 3 will cover engineered and pre-engineered specialty systems
- Phase 2 regulations development is scheduled to begin in the fourth quarter of this year

### **2. Implementation Period**

- First six months (07/2017 – 01/2018) – Fitters can become certified without taking an exam
  - Strongly encourage currently qualified sprinkler fitters to apply within the first 6 mos. so as to not take an exam.
- No certification card required in the first year (07/2017-07/2018).
- Beginning in the second year (07/2018), at least one certified fitter card holder required on each job site.
- Implementation period ends in 18 months (01/2019) – all sprinkler fitters, apprentices, and trainees on jobsite will be required to have a certification or registration card from this point forward.

### **3. Outreach**

- CAL FIRE – OSFM staff will be attending meetings, industry functions, meet & greets, etc. to educate as many concerned parties as possible regarding the new regulations.
  - Will be attending both NorCal and SoCal monthly FPO meetings until the end of the year:
    - NorCal next mtg - 06/23/17(Sacramento)
    - SoCal next mtg - 06/14/17(Brea)

- Assistant Deputy Director Daniel Berlant, Senior Deputy Jeff Schwartz and AES Program Coordinator Arnold Hy attended the American Fire Sprinkler Association (AFSA) – Greater Bay Area Chapter luncheon on 05/25
- Will be publishing an article in CSLB C-16 newsletter
- Sending mail-outs of Information Bulletin to C-16 holders

#### **4. Changes to AES Webpage**

- New regulations Chapter 5.5 have been added to the AES Laws and Regulations “book”
  - Can read the entire regulations online
- Other resources added to webpage
  - Information Bulletin
  - Sprinkler Fitter Powerpoint Presentation
  - Flow Chart

#### **5. Exam Development**

- Plan A - Currently looking to contract with a vendor to develop and administer AES Sprinkler Fitter exams.
- Plan B – Currently putting together a workgroup to develop the sprinkler fitter exam.

#### **6. Current status**

- OSFM staff are currently finalizing internal processes and procedures for the program.
- Already receiving applications for processing and issuance of certification cards beginning July 1, 2017.

#### **7. Feedback from meetings**

- ASFA Luncheon (05/25) – Merit shop owners expressed frustration and dissatisfaction with the new regulations. They feel they are being unfairly singled out because the new regulations favor union labor.
  - Members had questions regarding application filing procedures, what types of repair will require a certification, how to become certified during the implementation period, and how to provide verification of experience and work hours.